



MOUTHGUARDS

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MOUTHGUARDS: A SMART CHOICE FOR PROTECTING YOUR SMILE

It's easy to take some things for granted until they're suddenly gone. Have you ever thought about how it would feel if you lost one or two of your front teeth? You'd probably avoid smiling. It would be uncomfortable talking with someone face-to-face. It wouldn't be easy pronouncing certain words. And how about eating an apple? Until your teeth are gone, you might not miss them.

Thousands of teens each year get hurt on the playing field, the basketball court, or while skateboarding, biking or during other activities. Blows to the face in nearly every sport can injure your teeth, lips, cheeks and tongue.

A properly fitted mouthguard, or mouth protector, is an important piece of athletic gear that can protect your teeth and smile. You may have seen them used in contact sports, such as football, boxing, ice

hockey, lacrosse and women's field hockey.

You don't have to be on the football field however, to benefit from a mouthguard. New findings in sports dentistry show that even in non-contact sports, such as gymnastics, mouthguards help protect teeth. Many experts recommend that a mouthguard be worn for any recreational activity that poses a risk of injury to the mouth.

There are three types of mouthguards: The ready-made, or stock, mouthguard; the mouth-formed "boil and bite" mouthguard; and the custom-made mouthguard made by your dentist. All three mouthguards provide protection but vary in comfort and cost.

The most effective mouthguard should have several features. It should be resilient, tear resistant and comfortable. It should fit properly, be durable and easy to clean, and not restrict your speech or breathing.



Generally, a mouthguard covers only the upper teeth but in some cases the dentist will instead make a mouthguard for the lower teeth. Your dentist can suggest the right mouthguard for you. If you have a mouthguard, take good care of it:

- Before and after each use, rinse it with cold water or with an antiseptic mouth rinse. You can clean it with toothpaste and a toothbrush too.
- When it's not used, place your mouthguard in a firm, perforated container. This permits air circulation and helps prevent damage.
- Avoid high temperatures, such as hot water, hot surfaces or direct sunlight, which can distort the mouthguard.
- Check it for tears, holes and to see whether it has become loose. A

mouthguard that's torn or in bad shape can irritate your mouth and lessen the amount of protection it provides.

- Have regular dental checkups and bring your mouthguard along so the dentist can make sure it's still in good shape.

Don't take your teeth for granted. Be cool.
Protect your smile. Wear a mouthguard.

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